GINGER: IN-DEPTH HERB PROFILE PG. 39

THE Herb COMPANION

NOVEMBER 2010

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HEALING CITRUS: 3 RECIPES

HERB & SALT PAIRINGS CHART PG. 32

Turn to page 22 to find this Pecan Pie Tart recipe.

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Circle #14; see card pg 51

HotMags - Free Magazines

A Love for Wild Places

A passion for wild places and pristine lands runs deep in every fiber of my being.

In fact, this passion runs so deep that I committed 15 years of my life to organizing and educating for numerous non-profits which worked towards the creation of a world where there was justice for the people, planet, and all living things.

When I came to Mountain Rose Herbs, I made sure that we would use our resources to help protect and defend the natural splendor and majestic beauty this world has to share.

This is why I guarantee that Mountain Rose Herbs will always work towards the enhancement and sustainability of our natural world. We will remain the leader in green business initiatives to protect this glorious land we call home.

Shawn Donville
Vice President

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The Traditions Issue

On the cover: Skip refined sugars this holiday season; discover why you should cook with citrus rinds; create your own gourmet salt blends; stay healthy with ginger; and more.

Holiday Desserts Without Refined Sugar

Avoid the seasonal sugar overload with our selection of unrefined sweeteners. Try our five scrumptious recipes, and check out a list of 11 great unrefined sugars.
Page 22

Herb & Salt Pairings with Chart on Page 32

Did you know that combining gourmet salts with herbs may help reduce your sodium intake? Learn which artisan salts give you the most bang for your buck.
Page 28

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Healing Citrus: 3 Recipes

A little citrus peel in your diet can go a long way. Use this ingredient in your kitchen to improve digestion and help clear chest congestion.
Page 34

Ginger: In-Depth Herb Profile

This sought-after herb is famous around the globe for its powerful flavor and its myriad health benefits. Learn how to best benefit from delicious ginger.
Page 39

28

iStockphoto.com/Floortje

Cover photo: Howard Lee Puckett

Get Healthy: Enjoy show-stopping dessert recipes sans refined sugars. Instead, these delicious treats use unrefined sugars for a tasty sweet that isn't too sweet. Find out all about 11 different types of unrefined sugars, as well.

Save Money: Artisan salts can perk up your cooking, but can also be pricey. Smoke or blend your own gourmet salt mixtures and learn all about the world of special salts so that you can confidently use them in your kitchen.

Skip the Doctor: Did you know that ancient healing traditions use citrus peels to treat various health issues? Learn how to use them to support your health. Our recipes will give you a boost by adding a little peel to your meals.

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- Design Challenge pictures

THE Herb COMPANION

Volume 23, Number 1

November 2010

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The Herb Companion Volume 23, Number 1 (ISSN 1040-581X) is published bimonthly by Ogden Publications Inc., 1503 SW 42nd St., Topeka, KS 66609, (785) 274-4300. USPS #004-086. Periodical postage paid at Topeka, KS 66609, and additional mailing offices. Canada Post International Publications Mail Product Sales Agreement No. 40601019.

POSTMASTER: Send address changes to *The Herb Companion*, Subscriptions, 1503 SW 42nd St., Topeka, KS 66609.
SUBSCRIPTIONS: Send all subscriptions and renewals to *The Herb Companion*, Subscriptions, 1503 SW 42nd St., Topeka, KS 66609. For subscription inquiries in the U.S. call (800) 456-6018. Outside the U.S., call (785) 274-4300. Subscription rate is $24/year in the U.S. Foreign and Canadian subscribers please pay $34/year for surface delivery or $54/year for Air Mail. U.S. Funds only. Subscribers: If the Post Office alerts us that your magazine is undeliverable, we have no further obligation unless we receive a corrected address within two years.

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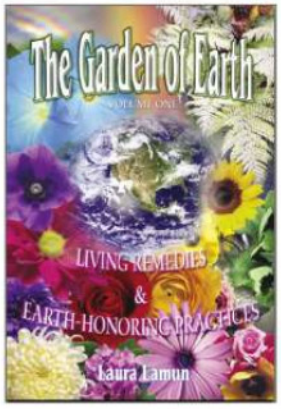

At Little Moon, our motto is **"No Harm Done"** to the Planet, the water supply, or the people we make products for. **Since 1994** we have championed the "green movement" creating products that truly ARE environmentally friendly, all-natural, and extraordinarily effective. This season, we want to go one step further and express our deepest desire: **FOR PEACE ON EARTH, Harmony and Love for All.** Seems like a big task for a small company - but we don't mind saying this is truly what we believe in, and what we strive for everyday. As the holidays approach - we wanted to remind you to **"Beach All You Want"** and take to your tub when you have to, but to **Create Peace** where and when you can!

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Circle #13; see card pg 51

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Taylor Cole Miller

Salt of the Herb

A few months ago, I received a little baggie containing a sample of smoked sea salt. It had such a powerful aroma I had to take it out of the office because people thought there had been a fire. I loved the aroma, though—it reminded me of cold nights camping in the Rocky Mountains, sipping stout *lapsang souchong* tea around a campfire and listening to the sound of wind swaying the pines.

I took the salt home and created an absolutely delicious, utterly ad hoc grilled salmon recipe, using garlic, lime juice, some fresh orange thyme (*Thymus ×citriodorus* 'Orange') from my herb garden and light sprinkles of the smoky sea salt. Wow! I remember thinking at the time that we *had* to let our readers know about these lovely salts that marry so spectacularly with herbs. When I got the salt story proposal from Tabitha Alterman, I immediately replied with an enthusiastic, "Yes." After you read her story on Page 28, we hope you'll let us know what pairings you invented.

On Page 16, you'll see some good body-care product recipes using one of my favorite ingredients: vinegar. I use it to restore the shine to my hair, and lately I've been taking a vinegar, witch hazel and lavender concoction with me to the swimming pool to neutralize the chlorine. It works like a champ and I'm looking forward to trying some of the other recipes in this article. (I can't imagine the *Vin Aigre* Bath happening in my home, however, since it calls for using leftover wine, and the idea of *that* just makes me laugh.)

Our staff got really hungry as we began to look at the food images for this issue. If you're looking for alternatives to refined sugar, we have some delicious recipes in the article on Page 22, including one without gluten. We've wondered how many of our readers are interested in gluten-free recipes, so if this is something you'd like to see, please let us know and we'll expand on this in the future.

We are very proud to announce that we now offer a digital version of *The Herb Companion.* The content in the digital version (for your computer or smart phone) is identical to that in the print magazine, and the digital version is simple to use and easy to read. You can buy single issues or sign up for a digital subscription and you'll receive an e-mail notification when each new issue is available. If you already subscribe to our print magazine, you can sign up to receive the digital version for free and you'll receive the digital version about two weeks before your print magazine arrives. To learn more and to sign up, go to *www.herbcompanion.com/digital-editions.*

Onward!

K.C.

K.C. Compton, Editor in Chief

Be a Guest Blogger

Are you interested in being part of our herbal community online? We are always looking for guest bloggers. Whether you blog currently and want to expand onto our site, or you are an Internet novice looking for a group of fellow herb enthusiasts, we'd love to have you blog on *www.herbcompanion.com.* E-mail us at *editor@herbcompanion.com* to find out more.

Wondering what guest blogging is all about? Meet the Lemon Verbena Lady, one of our star guest bloggers, on Page 14. We've printed a bit about her and an excerpt from one of her blogs.

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Circle #4; see card pg 51

Dear *Herb Companion,*

IT WAS FUN to see the recipe for Berry Freezer Jam in the September 2010 article "Healing By Way of Berries." My grandmother always called this Bumbleberry Jam. Her reason was that these berry bushes were frequented by bumblebees, not honeybees. Thanks for the memory! I continue to make this from the fruit on my bushes. You can even substitute seasonal berries.

Mary Lynne Farrell
Elk Rapids, Michigan

I AM SURE WHEN you receive an envelope, it is more often than not a query letter or submission. However, in recognition of National Poetry Month, I would like to share this little poem with you, no strings attached:

Hummingbird's Wings
If we could move our souls
to forgiveness
like the hummingbird's wings,
hate would disappear,
evaporate like a morning mist.

Loretta Walker
Odessa, Texas

WHEN SENDING OUT greeting cards for all occasions, such as birthdays, get well, sympathy, thinking of you, etc., I place a leaf of a scented geranium and small greenery with a narrow bow attached. A dab of craft glue holds all in place. I grow many scented geraniums of various fragrances, and overwinter a few for this purpose especially. These fragrant cards are always well received, and remembered for their thoughtfulness.

Frances Zigmont
Binghamton, New York

I WAS READING ABOUT caraway seed and its beneficial properties in your September 2010 article "Stealth Health with Culinary Herbs." I have been drinking caraway seed tea since I was a child and find it rather tasty. We brewed it just as any other tea and sweetened it to taste. I prefer to add a bag of natural black, green or white tea for the extra jolt I get from the tannins. Otherwise, the seeds are steamed in hot water just like any other tea. It's that simple.

Christine Villarino
Mojave, California

YOUR TIPS FOR naturally controlling fleas and ticks in the July 2010 article "Repel Pests Naturally" are great. Not only are your tips helpful, they cut the chances of your pet being harmed by the chemicals found in common methods of pest control. And, most of the herbs mentioned are easily obtained.

Jennifer Perez
Redmond, Oregon

I JUST SUBSCRIBED to your wonderful magazine at the 2010 Wisconsin Renewable Energy fair. I was delighted to finally find a magazine devoted to one of my favorite things—herbs! I truly enjoyed reading all of the interesting articles in the July 2010 issue. Thank you so much for putting out such a wonderful publication. I am looking forward to receiving the next issue.

Rachel Bechtel
Hubertus, Wisconsin

CORRECTION: In "Get Gorgeous with Honey for Healthy Skin" (September 2010), we mistakenly used the word "bumblebee" in place of the word "honeybee." We regret the error. —Eds.

Facebook Friends

Reader Carolyn Williams from Spokane, Washington, submitted this picture on our Facebook page. She says, "I love the look and smell of my sage; it smells so good and makes great dried arrangements. I also like the band Riders of the Purple Sage and Zane Grey's book of the same name." Find us on Facebook at *www.facebook.com/theherbcompanion.*

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Dry a bounty of fresh herbs for use all winter.

Preserve Flavor

Eat Herbs All Winter

Preserving that fresh herb flavor doesn't end with the drying process. Here's how to keep that distinct flavor going strong until next season.

Store dried herbs in glass or ceramic containers or jars equipped with airtight lids. Plastic containers are air-permeable and therefore not a good choice. You can also store dried herbs in a clean recycled glass container, such as a mayonnaise, mustard, peanut butter or baby food jar.

Make sure herbs are completely dried before storing. Sufficiently dried leaves should crumble easily when crushed between your thumb and finger. Check the container after one week for any signs of dampness or moisture inside the container or on the herb. If moisture is detected, remove the contents and dry again until the herb is completely dried.

Store dried herbs in a cool, dark, dry area such as a cupboard or drawer. Keep containers away from windowsills and other bright light areas as well as any heat or humidity sources, such as a stove, sink or dishwasher.

When adding dried herbs to any recipe, measure out the amount away from the stove. Standing over the stove with an open jar adds humidity and will shorten the storage life and flavor of the herb. —*Kris Wetherbee writes in western Oregon.*

Tarragon Pesto

This is a nice twist on basil pesto and can be used in its place. At your next dinner party, try serving Tarragon Pesto on pasta. Trust us—your guests will thank you. Excerpted with permission from The Herb Garden Gourmet *(Sourcebooks, 2009) by Tim Haas and Jan Beane. To buy, see Page 59.*

1 cup (about 2 bunches) fresh tarragon leaves
1 cup (about 2 bunches) fresh flat-leaf parsley
½ cup slivered almonds
1 cup Parmesan cheese
2 cloves garlic, peeled
Juice and zest of 1 lemon
¼ cup cold-pressed olive oil
¼ teaspoon salt
¼ teaspoon pepper

1 Place all ingredients in a food processor and pulse a few times until mostly smooth. Be sure to scrape down the sides of the processor occasionally.

Tarragon Pesto is delightful with penne. You can also use it as a spread for thin crackers.

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Circle #17; see card pg 51

OREGON'S WILD HARVEST
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From Nurse to Herbalist...

"At a young age, I loved helping my grandmother plant tomatoes in our family garden. She'd always say "feed your family with a garden and everyone will enjoy good health". Still, it wasn't until I'd worked as a surgical nurse for more than twenty years that I fully understood what she meant. You see, most of our patients ended up in surgery for the same reason, an unhealthy diet and lifestyle. They had relied heavily on pharmaceuticals to suppress their symptoms instead of focusing on the deeper problem. While there is certainly a place for both surgery and pharmaceuticals, I knew there had to be a less invasive method that provided more of a whole body approach. After doing some research, I found myself at the doorstep of natural herbal medicine. Immediately, I accepted an opportunity to work with an organic herb farm and supplement manufacturer. This experience only reaffirmed my commitment to alternative healthcare. Eventually, in 1994, I took my knowledge and experience as a nurse, organic farmer and herbalist, and started Oregon's Wild Harvest. Today, my Biodynamic® herb farm reflects one of the best ways I know to support alternative healthcare, while at the same time ensuring the sustainability of the earth my grandmother and I value so much."

– Randy Buresh, Co-founder of Oregon's Wild Harvest

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Circle #15; see card pg 51

[Herbal Careers]

Become a *Professional* Herbal Healer

Getting to know herbs evokes a variety of responses, from "How would this taste in a cream sauce?" to "Could these really help my blood pressure?" Some people take the conversation much further, however, and realize that they want to learn everything they can about medicinal plants so they can become herbal healers. Immediately after that inspiration, they're likely to find themselves asking some very basic questions: "How do I become a practicing herbalist?" or "What are the steps, where are the schools and what's next?"

Answering those questions isn't always easy. The United States requires no state or federal licensing for medical herbalists. However, herbal medicine is a growing field with good professional prospects and many choices, depending on your career preferences.

One option is to become a naturopathic physician with a degree from an institution such as Bastyr University in Kenmore, Washington. Bastyr is one of seven programs accredited by the Association of Accredited Naturopathic Medical Colleges.

Naturopaths are licensed in 15 states, which you'll find on the website for the American Association of Naturopathic Physicians, *www.naturopathic.org*.

How to Get a Healing Education

The American Herbalists Guild has an excellent guide to help get anyone started on their quest for an education: *www.americanherbalistsguild.com/herbal_education.* You also can contact these herbal educators:

American College of Healthcare Sciences
www.achs.edu

Bastyr University
www.bastyr.edu

The British Institute of Homeopathy
www.bihinternational.com

East West School of Planetary Herbology
www.planetherbs.com

Institute of Chinese Herbology
www.ich-herbschool.com

Kingdom College of Natural Health
www.kcnh.org

Midwest School of Herbal Studies
www.midwestherbalstudies.com

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www.tai.edu

Trinity School of Natural Health
www.trinityschool.org

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Naturopathic practice includes a variety of natural therapies, including a strong component of herbal medicine.

If Traditional Chinese Medicine (acupuncture and botanical practice) piques your interest, explore the informative website of the Accreditation Commission for Acupuncture and Oriental Medicine (*www.acaom.org*). Most states have licensing for acupuncturists, many of whom use herbs in their practice.

Independent schools like Tai Sophia Institute in Laurel, Maryland, offer master's programs in botanical medicine. Mountain State University in Beckley, West Virginia, also offers a degree program in herbal sciences.

The American Herbalists Guild has a useful and easy-to-navigate Web page, "AHG Guide to Getting an Herbal Education," which outlines various options and opportunities including distance learning, short courses, and comprehensive on-site courses, as well as apprenticeships and independent scholarship options. (See "How to Get a Healing Education," above.)

While herbalism once relied heavily on apprenticeships, folk wisdom and informal learning, the modern herbal student has those historic channels, plus new educational choices. —*Steven Foster is an expert in medicinal plants.*

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Circle #15; see card pg 51

RE-BLOG

Meet the Lemon Verbena Lady, one of our dedicated guest bloggers. You can check her out on *The Herb Companion* website, *www.herbcompanion.com/lemonverbenalady*, or you can visit her personal blog, *www.lemonverbenalady.blogspot.com*. For more about becoming a guest blogger, see Page 6.

Make the Most of Thanksgiving Leftovers

Last year, my husband (i.e., The Herbal Husband) and I had a nice dinner with herbed stuffed turkey breast, mashed Yukon gold potatoes, white asparagus from Peru, rolls and pecan pie. The Herbal Husband, who is from Peru, always enjoys having a connection to Peru, even when the holiday is an American one. This is also a special day for the two of us because it was 27 years ago that we met on Thanksgiving.

The leftovers are my other favorite part about Thanksgiving. I have been making this recipe for a very long time and it never fails to please family and friends. It is very easy to make and adds another layer of flavor to that wonderful turkey.

Circle #19; see card pg 51

Circle #16; see card pg 51

Turkey Tetrazzini

The Lemon Verbena Lady whips up this recipe with Thanksgiving leftovers. MAKES 6 TO 8 SERVINGS

4 tablespoons butter
½ pound fresh mushrooms, sliced
6 tablespoons flour
2 cups chicken broth
2 cups light cream
Salt and pepper to taste
2 cups cooked turkey, diced
12 ounces thin spaghetti, cooked
1 cup Parmesan cheese, grated
1 tablespoon sherry
Buttered bread crumbs, optional

1 Preheat oven to 350 degrees.
2 Melt butter in a Dutch oven. Add sliced mushrooms and brown slightly. Blend in flour. Add chicken stock. Cook, stirring, until thickened and smooth.
3 Gradually stir in cream. Season to taste. Add turkey, cooked spaghetti, grated cheese and sherry. Place in large buttered baking dish. Sprinkle with buttered bread crumbs, if desired. Bake for 20 minutes.

Editor's Pick

Marine Anti-Aging Cream by **Gabriel Organics**, $35.50

Infused with soothing blue-green algae and rosehip seed oil, this hydrating lotion brightens dry, dull skin. Apply this lightly scented lotion, blended with anti-aging antioxidants such as vitamins A, C and E, to the face and neck to moisturize and protect your delicate skin from the elements and damaging environmental factors. *www.gabrielcosmeticsinc.com*

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Circle #8; see card pg 51

Herbal Vinegars for Skin and Hair

BY JANICE COX

Did you know diluted vinegar is an ancient skin elixir? Try these eight beauty recipes using herbal vinegars.

Vinegar is one of the oldest known fermented food products. The word vinegar comes from the French *vin aigre,* which means "sour wine." When air is exposed to fermented liquid, bacterial activity occurs and the result is acetic acid or sour vinegar. When fruit juice ferments it also turns to vinegar. Vinegars are known for their high acid content (due to acetic acid) and sharp odors. In cosmetic products, vinegar is used to remove alkaline, or soap residue, from the skin and hair. You should never apply straight vinegar to your skin or hair; instead, dilute the vinegar with water (at a ratio of one part vinegar to eight parts water). See the opposite page for our favorite vinegars; or you can easily make your own by leaving a bottle of wine or fruit juice uncorked for several days.

Herbal vinegars are also simple to create and a great way to use fresh and dried herbs from your garden. Simply fill a clean jar with apple cider or white vinegar and add your favorite herbs. Let sit for two weeks and you will have a vinegar that can be used for cosmetic purposes.

The restorative powers of vinegar have been renowned since ancient times. Ancient mythology recounts that Helen of Troy took vinegar baths, adding a cup or two to her bathwater to cleanse and soothe her skin. Vinegar is also a classic remedy for sunburn, bad breath and dandruff. Here are a few more herbal vinegar recipes for you to enjoy.

[The Recipes]

Mint-Vinegar Skin Toner

This toner helps restore acidity to the skin, keeping it toned, healthy and resistant to infection. All skin types benefit from using vinegar. It helps control blackheads in oily skin and cures flakiness in very dry skin. The fresh mint leaves a cooling sensation on your skin.

3 tablespoons fresh mint leaves (or 1 tablespoon dried)
2 tablespoons apple cider vinegar
1 cup distilled water

1 Mix together all ingredients, then pour into a clean container and let sit for 3 days.
2 Strain or filter out all solids and pour into a clean bottle with a tight-fitting lid.
3 To use: Apply to clean skin with a cotton pad.

Purifying Facial Mask

This is a simple egg mask that is effective in clearing up acne and getting your complexion really clean. It will draw impurities out of your pores and deep-cleanse your skin. It is important to wash your face first with warm water to open up your pores. Use weekly for a glowing complexion.

2 egg yolks
1 teaspoon salt
1 tablespoon apple cider or white vinegar

1 Mix together ingredients until smooth.
2 To use: Apply to clean skin and leave on for 15 to 20 minutes. Rinse with warm water and then cool water and pat your skin dry. Apply to face and leave on until it dries, then wash it off with warm water.

After-Bath Splash

This after-bath splash will refresh your body and mind. It is especially uplifting after showering. Honey helps your skin retain moisture.

2 cups apple cider vinegar
⅓ cup honey
1 tablespoon fresh sage (or 1 teaspoon dried)
1 tablespoon fresh thyme (or 1 teaspoon dried)
1 teaspoon ground dried cloves

1 Mix together all ingredients and pour into a clean jar; let sit for 2 weeks.
2 Shake the jar daily to remix ingredients. Strain the liquid and pour into a clean bottle.
3 To use: After washing, splash on skin; let dry.

Vin Aigre Bath

Wine vinegar in the bath softens skin and restores its natural acid balance; women have done it for centuries. Save any leftover wine from your table and allow it to "sour" (let it sit unopened at room temperature for several days). Bottled and tied up with a bow, this is a perfect last-minute hostess gift.

1 cup sour wine or wine vinegar

1 To use: Pour the vinegar into a warm bath and enjoy. For gift giving, fill pretty bottles with red or white wine vinegar and add a sprig of dried herb.

Try These

Herbal Cider Hair Clarifier & Color Sealer by John Masters Organics, $17. *www.johnmasters.com*

Distilled white vinegar by Heinz, $1.39. *www.heinzvinegar.com*

Organic apple cider vinegar by Bragg, $3.29. *www.bragg.com*

Red wine vinegar by Fleischmann's Vinegar, $3.99. *www.fleischmannsvinegar.com*

7 Vinegar Beauty Tips

Try these quick and easy ways to use herbal vinegars to keep your skin and hair looking and feeling clean and fresh.

Relieve dry skin: Pour ½ cup baking soda, ½ cup uncooked oatmeal and 1 cup vinegar into a warm bath for a refreshing and soothing soak.

Enhance your body wash: Add 1 tablespoon of vinegar to 1 cup of your favorite liquid soap or cleanser. The vinegar will make your skin silky soft.

Clean hands: Wash your hands with vinegar to soften them. This is especially helpful after working in the garden to remove dirt and stains.

Deodorize: Vinegar is a natural deodorizer. Simply splash some herbal or white vinegar under your arms and allow to dry.

Freshen your breath: A vinegar-salt water rinse is especially helpful for ridding your breath of onions or garlic. Mix 2 tablespoons vinegar, 1 tablespoon salt and 1 cup water to make an effective mouth rinse.

Clean combs and hairbrushes: Soak them in a solution of 2 cups hot water and ½ cup vinegar overnight. In the morning, rinse well with cool water and allow to air dry.

Sunburn soother: Soothe a sunburn by mixing 1 tablespoon of vinegar with 1 cup of water and spraying onto your skin. Follow with a non-oil moisturizer, as the vinegar can dry skin.

Soothing Foot Soak

Baking soda helps deodorize and soften your feet and also causes a fizzing effect when mixed with the vinegar and water. After soaking your feet for at least 10 minutes, use a natural pumice stone to smooth and remove calluses.

2 quarts warm water
¼ cup baking soda
¼ cup herbal or white vinegar
2 tablespoons fresh herb leaves or flowers

1 Fill a large plastic pan or sink with warm water. Stir in the baking soda, vinegar, fresh herbs and flower petals. The water will fizz and bubble when the soda and vinegar combine.
2 To use: Soak your feet for 15 to 20 minutes. Pat dry and massage them with a rich natural oil or foot cream.

No-Dandruff Rinse

Dandruff is a condition of the scalp where the skin becomes very dry and flaky. This hair rinse will help deep-cleanse your scalp and rid it of any dead skin cells. The vinegar in the rinse can be drying to hair. Avoid drying out your hair in the process of treating your scalp by following with a rich conditioner.

½ cup red wine or apple cider vinegar
½ cup fresh mint leaves (or 1 tablespoon dried)
1 cup boiling water

1 Place vinegar and mint leaves in a bowl and pour the boiling water over them. Let the mixture cool completely and then strain.
2 To use: Apply the solution to the scalp as a final rinse after shampooing. Rinse well with cool water.

Hair Softening Rinse

This hair rinse will get your hair super clean and leave it soft and shiny. Vinegar removes buildup and residue from your hair and closes the cuticles. You can also use herbal vinegars or plain white vinegar in this recipe.

2 tablespoons apple cider vinegar
2 tablespoons fresh lemon juice
3 cups distilled water

1 Mix together apple cider vinegar, lemon juice and water, and stir well.
2 To use: Pour over your hair after shampooing as a final rinse. Dry and style as usual.

Janice Cox is the author of Natural Beauty at Home *(Holt Paperbacks, 2002). For more recipes and ideas or to contact Janice, visit her website at* www.janicecox.com. *See Page 59 to purchase the book.*

Herbal Vinegar Bath

This slightly acidic bath helps rinse away soap residue on your skin and reinstates your own natural acid balance. For women, it is also a good way to counteract yeast infections because the acidic environment will kill harmful bacteria. The combination of herbs gives your bath an uplifting scent that helps reduce stress.

- 1 cup apple cider vinegar
- 1 cup water
- 1 tablespoon fresh rosemary (or 1 teaspoon dried)
- 1 tablespoon fresh tarragon (or 1 teaspoon dried)
- 1 tablespoon fresh mint (or 1 teaspoon dried)
- 1½ teaspoons fennel seeds

1 Mix together all ingredients in a small saucepan or microwave container and heat gently until just boiling. Let the mixture cool completely and then strain off all solids.

2 To use: Pour the entire mixture into a warm bath and soak for 15 to 20 minutes.

Circle #12; see card pg 51

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Circle #5; see card pg 51

Arouse Your Senses: Grow Exotic-Tasting Herbs

BY KRIS WETHERBEE

The peel of makrut lime is popular in Asian curries, but watch out: The juice is quite bitter.

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Q I want to expand my culinary herb garden with plants that will lend an exotic flavor in the kitchen. Which herbs do you recommend?

A For herbs that excite the senses with a taste of the exotic, try lemongrass, lemon verbena, pineapple sage and makrut lime. Look for plants at select farmers' markets, garden centers, specialty catalogs or online stores.

With the exception of lemongrass, these tropical-tasting herbs benefit from an occasional to frequent pruning of branch tips—in other words, snipping of fresh sprigs—to encourage more leaf production. Often grown as annuals, they are all marginally hardy, though they thrive in containers. You can overwinter them as potted plants indoors.

Makrut Lime (*Citrus hystrix*)

Native to Thailand, this small, shrubby tree bears green lime-sized, bumpy-skinned fruit. You need two genetically diverse plants for cross-pollination to ensure fruiting. Also known as Kaffir lime, although this term is best avoided because it is an Afrikaner slur.

Growing conditions: Best in full sun to light shade and moist, well-drained soil; protect from hard freezes. Zone 9.

Culinary tips: The juice is bitter, but the strongly flavored peel is sought after in many Asian dishes, especially curries. Use the intensely flavored leaves to season broth, soups and stews as you would bay leaves, removing them before serving. Thinly slice tender leaves for use in salads, stir-fries and curries.

Lemongrass leaves add a citrus zing to broths.

Lemongrass (*Cymbopogon citratus*)

The grassy lime-green to bluish-green stalks of this 3- to 5-foot-tall tender perennial grow as densely tufted clumps.

Growing conditions: Best grown in full sun and rich, well-drained soil with ample moisture. Zone 9.

Culinary tips: The tough outer leaves lend a citrusy flavor to broths, soups and stews—just remove them before serving. Chop or mince the tender inner stalks and plump white bases and add to curries, stir-fries, salads, chicken, poultry or seafood dishes.

Lemon Verbena (*Aloysia triphylla*)

Perhaps no other herb can appease the true lemon lover like lemon verbena can. This deciduous woody shrub to bushy, tender perennial grows 3 to 5 feet in cooler climates; 10 to 15 feet tall in frost-free regions of the South.

Growing conditions: Prefers rich and moderately moist, well-drained soil in full sun. The roots can be hardy down to 20 degrees if heavily mulched and grown in a protected area. Zone 8.

Culinary tips: Use fresh or dried leaves in teas and beverages; salads and fruit dishes; salad dressings and marinades; and baked goods and desserts. Lemon verbena brightens the flavor of fish and chicken. (See the herb on Page 41.)

Pineapple Sage (*Salvia elegans*)

This mostly herbaceous subshrub grows from 3 to 5 feet tall and features brilliant green, slightly hairy pineapple-scented leaves and red, trumpet-shaped flower spikes from summer until frost.

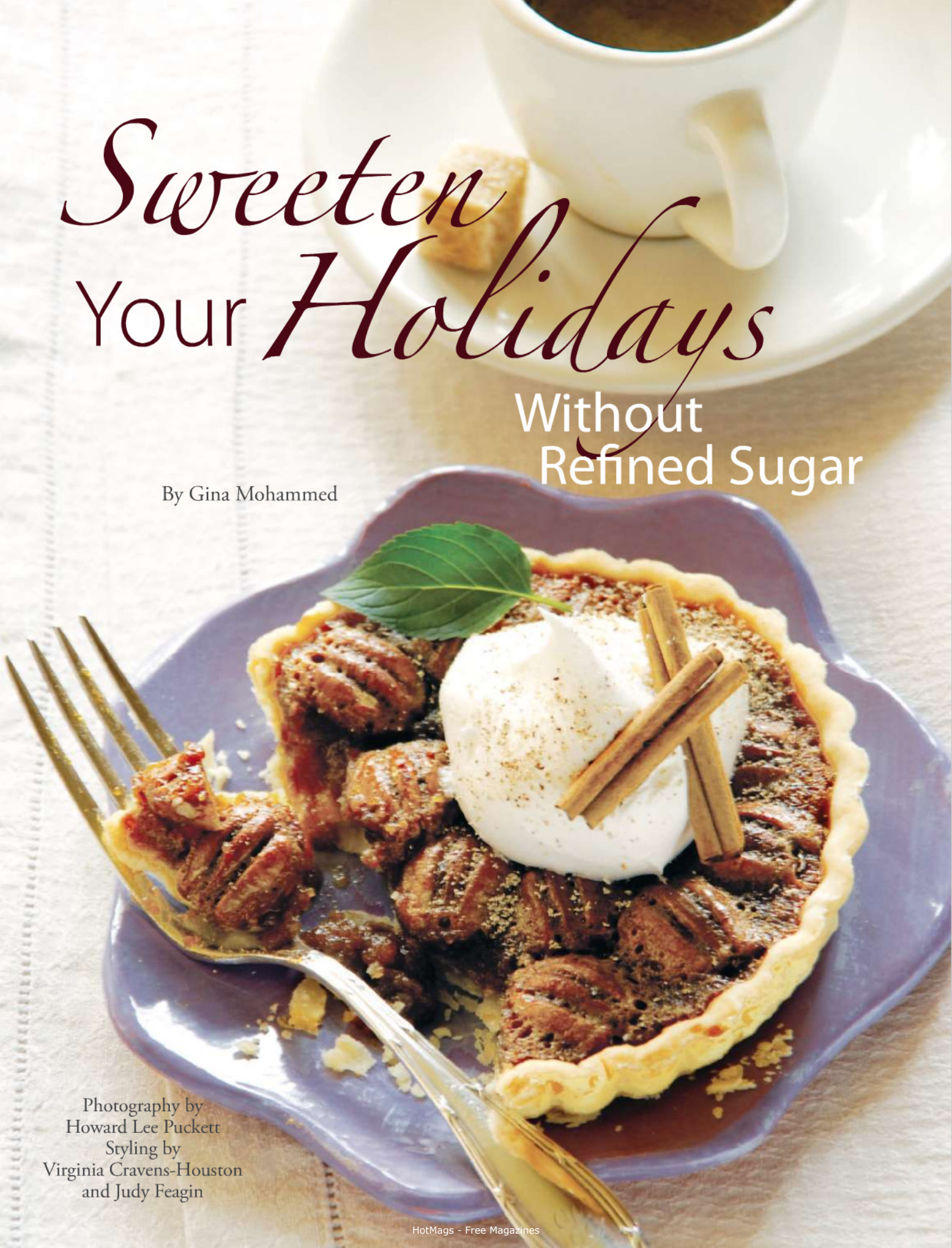
Growing conditions: Plants thrive in full sun and rich, well-drained soil, but appreciate some shade in hot summer areas. Pineapple sage prefers more moisture and nitrogen than most other species of sage. Zone 9, but can be grown a zone or two lower if you cut back the plant in late fall and cover the soil with a thick layer of winter mulch.

Culinary tips: Use fresh or dried leaves with foods that are enhanced by the light tropical flavor of pineapple, such as fruit salads, jams and jellies—or to heighten the flavor of cheeses and desserts.

Kris Wetherbee grows herbs in western Oregon. She is a contributing editor for The Herb Companion.

Sweeten Your Holidays Without Refined Sugar

By Gina Mohammed



Photography by
Howard Lee Puckett
Styling by
Virginia Cravens-Houston
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When your friends and family gather this holiday season, treat them by serving pitch-perfect desserts—sweetened with unrefined sugars. After all, special pies, cakes and cookies are the stuff of memories. But let's face it: A chance to cut some sugar from our diets, while keeping the deliciousness in, is much needed.

Consider the average American, who now consumes 136 pounds of added sugar every year. This is not sugar naturally present in foods like fruit and grains, but that which is added in baking, cooking and food processing. Half is refined sugar, the rest mainly corn sweeteners used in industrial food processing. Little is from wholesome or less-processed sweeteners such as honey, maple syrup, molasses or fruit.

What's Wrong with Refined Sugar?

Sugar is not inherently evil. Even refined white sugar (99.9 percent sucrose) is not dangerous in moderation—the body can metabolize sucrose for energy and other functions. Problems arise when we consume more sugar than our bodies have the capacity to manage. That threshold is about 6 teaspoons a day for women and 9 teaspoons for men, according to the American Heart Association. Currently, Americans consume at least three to four times that amount. Clearly, sugar is loved in too many ways!

Sugar overload is linked to such ills as worsening age-related mental decline; type 2 diabetes; cardiovascular disease; elevated low-density lipoprotein (LDL) cholesterol and triglycerides; and obesity in children and adults.

Refined sugar is also rather disappointing as a food. Refining sugarcane sap or sugar beet extract (the two main sources of white sugar) deplete enzymes, vitamins, minerals and other trace nutrients originally present in the plant.

Surely, there are more healthful alternatives to enjoy.

Honey—The Versatile Sweetener

Honey, an enduring favorite, has flavor, goodness and variety. More than 300 North American plants are used by bees to concoct honey. Flavors range from the dark, assertive honeys of buckwheat to the milder charms of clover or basswood and the delicacy of fireweed. Honey's goodness comes partly from its fermentable carbohydrates, which support bifidobacteria—those faithful friends of our digestive tract. In its raw (unpasteurized) state, honey also contains protein, vitamins and antioxidants.

In desserts, lighter honeys are good for delicately flavored

Graphic: iStockphoto.com/yewkeo

Pecan Pie Tarts

Cover Recipe

The assertive flavor of barley malt syrup is paired here with the much lighter-flavored rice syrup to produce a balanced sweetness. Note: If you don't have 4-inch tart pans, you can make a standard 9-inch pie by halving the amount of pecans to 1 cup. MAKES 8 TARTS

1 (15-ounce) package refrigerated piecrusts
3 large eggs
½ cup barley malt syrup
1 cup brown rice syrup
½ teaspoon ground cinnamon
¼ teaspoon ground nutmeg
3 tablespoons butter, melted
⅛ teaspoon salt
1 tablespoon all-purpose flour
2 cups pecan halves
Whipped cream, mint sprigs, ground nutmeg and broken cinnamon sticks, for garnish

1 Preheat oven to 375 degrees.
2 Unroll piecrust on a flat surface; roll to a 13-inch circle. Cut 4 (6-inch) rounds; press each into a 4½-inch round tart pan. Repeat procedure with remaining piecrust.
3 Beat eggs in a large mixing bowl. Add barley malt syrup, rice syrup, spices, butter and salt; mix well. Stir in flour. Reserve ½ cup mixture; pour remaining mixture into tart shells.
4 Arrange pecan halves over filling. Drizzle with remaining syrup mixture.
5 Bake for 40 minutes, or until firm in the center. Remove from oven and cool.
6 Garnish just before serving.

Artichokes, Anyone?

Eating an artichoke at supper will make other foods seem sweeter. Artichokes contain active components such as cynarin, a unique polyphenolic compound that stimulates sweetness receptors in the taste buds. Even water is sweeter after an artichoke!

sweets; darker ones for some fruit pie fillings, dense puddings and fruit cakes. Choose local or domestic honeys from reputable suppliers; ask at your local market.

Molasses—Wasted Treasure

Molasses is what's left after white sugar has been removed from the sap of the sugarcane plant. These dregs of refining actually contain the best nutrients.

Light molasses, left after the initial sugar extraction, is golden-colored and sweet, perfect in gingerbread, spice cakes, and as dessert sauces.

Blackstrap molasses, left after the final extraction, is stronger and slightly bitter, and is used only in small amounts. (I once substituted an equal quantity of blackstrap for fancy light molasses in my gingerbread men—they were strong enough to get up and walk off the cookie tray.)

Blackstrap molasses is stocked with vitamins and minerals, being a good source of manganese, copper, iron, calcium, potassium, magnesium and vitamin B6. Unsulfured organic molasses is best.

When substituting molasses for refined sugar, baked goods will darken more quickly, so reduce oven temperature by 25 degrees. Also add extra baking soda (1 teaspoon per cup of molasses) to counteract the acidity.

Date Sugar—Super Sweet

Date sugar is the dried, ground fruits of the date palm (*Phoenix dactylifera*). This whole fruit product is rich in fiber, protein, minerals and vitamins. It may be used instead of regular sugar, but it will not melt or dissolve in liquids. Try it in muffins, dessert squares, tart fillings and firm puddings. It is stable and keeps well for up to a year at room temperature. Purchase date sugar from health-food stores, specialty groceries or online suppliers.

Brown Rice Syrup—Nutty, Chewy

Brown rice syrup, a traditional Asian sweetener, is still a novelty in North America. Less sweet than regular sugar, brown rice syrup yields a pleasant nutty flavor and chewy texture. Drizzle this subtly sweet syrup over ice cream or dessert-style pancakes, or use in any dessert requiring liquid sweetener.

The syrup is made from brown rice starch that has been fermented and broken down enzymatically to yield maltose, a complex sugar. And because it contains a mix of 50 percent soluble complex carbohydrates, 45 percent maltose sugar and 3 percent glucose, brown rice syrup is absorbed more gradually into the bloodstream, thus avoiding dangerous spikes in blood sugar. The syrup has a shelf life of six months.

Barley Malt Syrup—Sweet Tonic

Barley malt syrup—made from sprouted barley that has been dried, powdered and mixed with water—historically was given to children in Europe as an iron-rich, blood-fortifying tonic. It also delivers B vitamins, potassium and magnesium. Its flavor is a bit strong, though less sweet than regular sugar. Try it in spice cakes, muffins and steamed puddings. It keeps for about six months.

Six More Marvelous Sweeteners

Fruit: Fruit juices or mashed, dried, frozen, or fresh fruit lends flavor, color and natural sweetness to baked goods. Fruit contains natural sugars, including fructose, sucrose and glucose in good balance—plus fiber, vitamins, minerals and phytochemicals. The sweetest fruits are dates, bananas, figs, persimmons, lychees, guava, pomegranates, kumquats, mangoes and grapes. Many dessert recipes use fruit for sweetening with no added sugar.

Evaporated Cane Sugar: Also known as unrefined cane sugar, this product is sold under names like rapadura or sucanat, and also under brands like Alter Eco ground cane sugar. It is minimally processed, especially rapadura, which is filtered, heated gently to evaporate the water, and crystallized, thereby conserving nutrients of the sugarcane sap. You can use this product as you would regular sugar.

Maple, Birch or Sorghum Syrups: We already know how good maple syrup is. Birch syrup is tapped the same way and boiled down to produce a dark, vibrant syrup that is wonderful in candies or simply drizzled over ice cream. Sorghum syrup is

Ginger Cookies

MAKES 5 DOZEN

2¾ cups all-purpose flour
1¼ teaspoons baking soda
½ teaspoon salt
4 teaspoons ground ginger
2 teaspoons ground cinnamon
1 teaspoon ground nutmeg
½ teaspoon ground cloves
1 cup butter, softened
1¾ cups evaporated cane sugar
¾ cup firmly packed date sugar or unrefined brown sugar
1 large egg
⅓ cup unsulphured molasses
Raw sugar
Crystallized ginger cubes, for garnish

1 Preheat oven to 350 degrees. Combine flour and next 6 ingredients in a small bowl.
2 Beat butter and sugars at medium speed with an electric mixer until fluffy. Add egg and molasses, beating until blended. Gradually add flour mixture, beating at low speed just until blended.
3 Shape dough into 1-inch balls; roll each ball in raw sugar. Place 2 inches apart on parchment-lined baking sheets.
4 Bake for 10 to 12 minutes. Cool on baking sheets 2 minutes. Remove to wire racks and cool completely.

Sweet Substitutes

To replace 1 cup of granulated sugar in baking or cooking, use:

Agave nectar: ¾ cup
Barley malt: 3 cups
Brown rice syrup: 2½ cups
Date sugar: 2 cups
Evaporated cane sugar: 1 cup
Fruit juice concentrate: 1 cup
Honey: ⅔ cup
Maple syrup: 1 cup
Molasses: ⅔ cup (all light or a combination of light and blackstrap)
Sorghum syrup: ⅔ cup

also worth trying. Sorghum is grown with very little pesticides (it's naturally insect-resistant)—so there should be fewer residues in your goodies.

Vegetables: Naturally sweet vegetables include yams and beets. One of the best chocolate cakes I ever tasted was loaded with beets for a super-moist, delicately sweet treat. Nonetheless, most dessert recipes using vegetables still need some added sweetener, as in the beet cake, opposite.

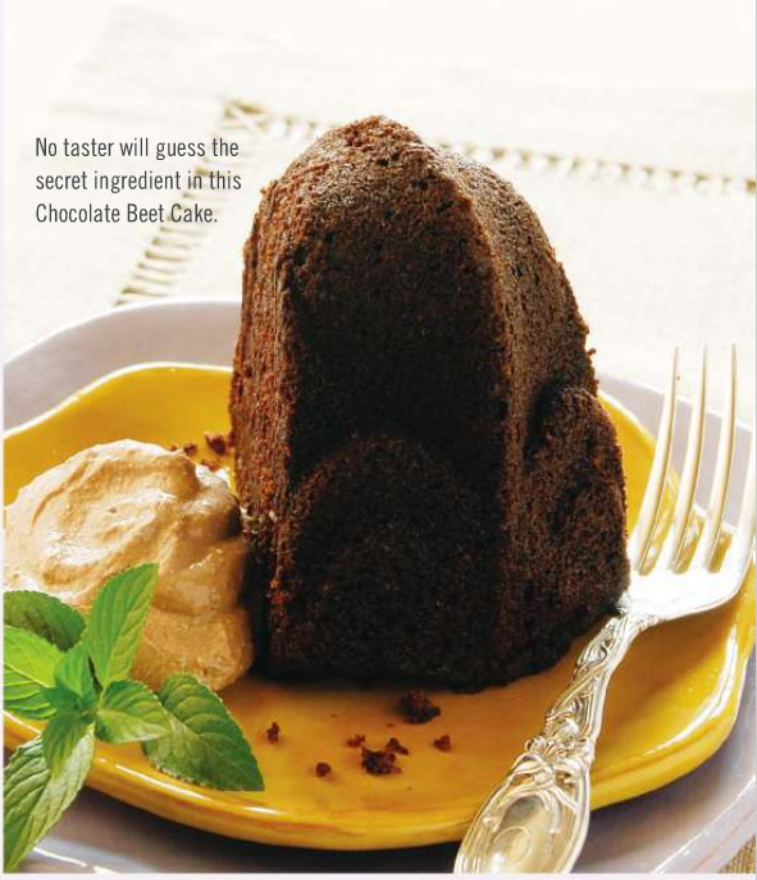
Sweeteners for Antioxidants

Some sweeteners supply antioxidants—substances that clean up unstable, damaging oxygen products in the body that can contribute to cancer, heart disease and degenerative disorders. Biochemists at Virginia Tech have analyzed various sweeteners, including molasses, date sugar, brown rice syrup, barley malt syrup, agave nectar, honey, corn syrup, and white or brown sugars. Blackstrap or dark molasses and date sugar were the best antioxidant sources. Barley malt syrup and brown rice syrup were slightly lower, and cane sugars, honey and agave nectar lower yet. Granulated white sugar and corn syrup had negligible amounts.

Spice It Up

Some spices and flavors enhance the sweetness of desserts—cinnamon, nutmeg, cloves, mint, and vanilla or almond extract add flavor and interest to countless sweet dishes. Try reducing the sugar in recipes and add an extra dash of these instead.

Gina Mohammed, Ph.D., is a plant physiologist who researches medicinal and other specialty uses of plants. E-mail editor@herbcompanion.com *or write to 1503 SW 42nd St., Topeka, KS 66609 for a detailed reference list.*



No taster will guess the secret ingredient in this Chocolate Beet Cake.

Ginger Molasses Muffins

MAKES 1 DOZEN

Gluten Free

½ cup boiling water
1¼ teaspoons baking soda
½ cup blackstrap molasses
½ cup canola oil
2 large eggs, beaten
1½ teaspoons grated ginger
½ cup white rice flour
½ cup brown rice flour
3 tablespoons whole-grain gluten-free flour, such as quinoa or buckwheat
½ cup potato starch
½ cup evaporated cane sugar
¾ teaspoon salt
½ teaspoon ground cinnamon
Pinch ground cloves
¼ cup crystallized ginger, minced
¼ cup raisins, chopped
¼ cup toasted walnuts for serving (optional)

1 Preheat oven to 350 degrees.
2 Grease a 12-cup muffin tin or place unbleached paper baking cups in muffin tins.
3 Whisk boiling water and baking soda in a medium bowl. Add molasses and oil; whisk to combine. Add eggs and fresh ginger; whisk to combine.
4 Whisk together flours, potato starch, sugar, salt, cinnamon and cloves until ingredients are evenly distributed.
5 Add wet ingredients to dry ingredients, stirring just until moistened. Fold in crystallized ginger and raisins.
6 Spoon batter into prepared muffin tins; bake for 30 to 35 minutes, or until a toothpick inserted into a muffin comes out clean. Cool in pan for about 5 minutes; remove from pan to wire racks to cool completely. Sprinkle with toasted walnuts and serve.

Magazines

[The Recipes]

Chocolate Beet Cake

This super-moist cake may be served plain or topped with a spoonful of Whipped Chocolate Ricotta (see recipe at right), whipped cream or frozen yogurt. If you use a standard 12-cup Bundt pan, reduce baking time to 45 minutes. SERVES 10

4 (1-ounce) squares unsweetened chocolate, chopped
1 cup vegetable oil, divided
3 large eggs
1½ cups evaporated cane sugar
2 cups beet puree*
1 tablespoon vanilla extract
1½ cups unbleached all-purpose flour
½ cup whole wheat pastry flour
2 teaspoons baking soda
¼ teaspoon salt
Chocolate mint sprigs, Whipped Chocolate Ricotta (recipe at right), for garnish

1 Preheat oven to 375 degrees. Grease and flour a 9-cup Bundt pan.
2 Place chocolate and ¼ cup oil in a small, heavy saucepan over low heat. Cook, stirring constantly, 8 to 10 minutes or until chocolate melts and mixture is smooth. Remove from heat; cool slightly.
3 Beat eggs in a large bowl at high speed with an electric mixer until foamy. Gradually add sugar and beat until fluffy. Slowly add remaining oil, melted chocolate, beets and vanilla.
4 Whisk together the flours, baking soda and salt in a medium bowl. Add flour mixture to the chocolate mixture; beat on low speed just until blended. Pour batter into prepared pan.
5 Bake for 50 to 55 minutes or until a long wooden pick inserted in center comes out clean. Cool cake in pan on a wire rack 10 to 15 minutes. Remove cake from pan and place on wire rack until completely cool.

*Note: To make beet puree, drain and process 2 (15-ounce) cans of sliced beets. To make fresh beet puree, scrub 3 to 4 medium beets with a vegetable brush and trim stems to 1 inch. Place in a large saucepan with water to cover. Bring to a boil over medium-high heat. Reduce heat to medium-low, and simmer 25 to 30 minutes, or until the beets are tender. Remove beets from heat; drain, rinse and cool completely. Slice beets and puree in a blender or food processor.

Whipped Chocolate Ricotta

Use with a garnish for a great stand-alone dessert, or without a garnish to dollop onto cake slices. SERVES 6

1 (15-ounce) container ricotta cheese
1 teaspoon vanilla extract
3 tablespoons unsweetened cocoa
¼ cup honey, or more to taste
½ teaspoon ground cinnamon
Orange wedges, mint sprigs and unsweetened cocoa, for garnish

1 Combine ricotta and next 4 ingredients in a mixing bowl. Beat at medium speed with an electric mixer until smooth and fluffy.
2 Spoon mixture into stemmed glasses; garnish with orange wedges and mint sprigs. Dust with unsweetened cocoa.

Cranberry Orange Cake

SERVES 12

1½ cups unsweetened orange juice
1 cup rolled oats
¼ cup butter, softened
2 large eggs
1½ teaspoons orange extract, divided
2½ cups unbleached flour
1 teaspoon baking soda
2 teaspoons baking powder
1 cup fresh cranberries, washed and sliced
2 cups heavy (whipping) cream

1 Preheat oven to 350 degrees.
2 Beat together orange juice, oats, butter, eggs and ½ teaspoon orange extract. Add flour, baking soda, baking powder and cranberries. Beat well.
3 Spoon into a greased and floured 9-by-13-inch baking pan, spreading batter evenly in pan. Bake 25 to 30 minutes or until a wooden pick inserted in center comes out clean. Cool on a wire rack.
4 Beat whipping cream and remaining teaspoon of orange extract at high speed with an electric mixer until soft peaks form.
5 Cut cake into squares and top with a dollop of whipped cream.

ONLINE EXCLUSIVE

Find bonus dessert recipes without refined sugar at *www.herbcompanion.com/unrefinedsugarrecipes.*

Perfect Pairings: Marrying Herbs and *Salts*

By Tabitha Alterman

Wars have been fought and won over salt. Mahatma Gandhi famously launched his first nonviolent protest by taking a pinch of salt from the sea, breaking the law that made it illegal to acquire salt from any source other than the British government. During the American Civil War, the Union army strategically destroyed the salt mines of the South in an effort to cripple the Confederacy. And lately, government health agencies have declared war on the salt in our nation's beloved processed foods.

Yet at the same time, we've seen a dramatic increase in consumer interest in expensive gourmet salts. Even with the economic problems of the last couple of years, HimalaSalt, the leading seller of the popular pink salt from the Himalayan mountains, expects to see a 130 percent growth in sales this year. The company's founder, Melissa Kushi, attributes this phenomenon to that "part of America that is beginning to look at food the way Europeans, Japanese and other cultures have for hundreds

Howard Lee Puckett

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Interest in fancy-pants salts has been on the rise in recent years, but which salts are worth their salt?

if not thousands of years. Where food comes from and in what season, how it's produced, how far it traveled, who grew it or made it, and all the gorgeous ways to prepare it—the deeper the education, the higher the quality of ingredients to be found in their cupboards," she says. "Artisan salts are a natural extension of that education—they're flavorful, sensual and transforming to any dish."

She's not alone: The upsurge in the popularity of healthy, sustainable, local and artisanal foods in recent years has resulted in a mind-boggling array of colorful, chunky salts at specialty food shops throughout the country. Keith Berner was a member of a community-supported agriculture (CSA) program in Vermont that supplemented farm-fresh produce with sea salt harvested in New England. "It tasted richer and had more depth than the other stuff, and it taught me how artisans can be involved in providing something as prosaic as salt, which I had never considered before," Berner says.

But is the higher price tag worth it? And is there really something special about these salts of many colors?

The Four Basic Salt Types

There are four basic types of salt: table salt, mined salts, sea salts and kosher salt.

About 100 years ago, the Morton Salt Company fixed its place in our kitchens by adding an anti-caking agent to **table salt**, creating a perfectly pourable, uniform product, hence the slogan, "When it rains, it pours." They also included iodine, because many people were deficient in this natural element. (Hardly anyone is anymore.) And to mask its mineral aftertaste, they added a form of processed sugar. Mark Bitterman, co-owner of The Meadow, an artisan food shop in Portland, Oregon, never uses common table salt. "The salt shaker filled with artificially refined, chemical-laden table salt is the ultimate symbol of the chemical industry's triumph among industrialized food producers," he says. Even if you don't take his hard-line approach, mixing salt with sugar might not be the way to go, particularly now that there are so many tasty options.

Mined salts, also called rock salts, are extracted from the earth like other precious mined commodities, and are generally

How to Blend Herb Flavors With Salts

Keep experimenting until you've found an incredible salt concoction that you'd be proud to put your name on!

Sara Jenkins, chef-owner of Porchetta, a widely acclaimed pig-focused sandwich shop in New York City, has painted a work of art onto the canvas of sea salt. Her shop sells Porchetta Salt, created with earthy Mediterranean herbs, wild fennel pollen and other "Tuscan engineering" (as the label claims). It has become as great a friend to pork as barbecue sauce ever was and is much lower in calories.

Dario Cecchini, a well-known butcher in Tuscany, has packed about as much aroma, heavy on the lavender and rosemary, as is humanly possible into an ultrafine, fluffy Italian sea salt. His *Profumo del Chianti* isn't easy to find, but knowing that something so fine even exists should be an invitation to creativity in *your* garden and kitchen.

Mark Bitterman, owner of specialty food shop The Meadow in Portland, Oregon, has been obsessed with artisanal salts for years, and he's found a perfect pairing for—believe it or not—vanilla ice cream! Iburi Jio Cherry salt is cooked over a cherry-wood fire for three days until its flavor is caramel-y, which, it turns out, might be better than chocolate sauce on your ice cream sundae.

Justin Esch and David Lefkow, two guys who love grilling, share a dream of making everything taste like bacon. If you agree that bacon goes with everything, you might like their pork-infused Bacon-Salt line, which includes several flavors like Hickory, Maple and Peppered.

Create Gourmet Salts

Blend Your Own

Delicate salt crystals will extract and absorb the essential flavor compounds and oils from your favorite herbs and other added ingredients, creating a perfect infusion.

Stir any of the following flavoring agents, or a creative combination, into kosher or sea salt. Start with about 1/2 teaspoon per tablespoon of salt, stirring together gently to keep delicate crystals intact. Keep in mind that dried ingredients have more concentrated flavors than their fresh counterparts, so you can use a little less. Store your infused salts in an airtight container for up to a month.

Citrus zest: grapefruit, lemon, lime, orange

Herbs: finely diced or crushed basil, cilantro, lavender, lemon balm, marjoram, mint, oregano, parsley, rosemary, sage, savory, tarragon, thyme; or whole bay leaf

Herb seeds: whole caraway, celery, coriander, cumin, fennel, poppy, sesame

Garlic: 3 fresh cloves, finely diced, or 1 teaspoon dried

Onions: finely diced fresh shallots, onions or scallions

Peppers: whole peppercorns or finely diced dried chilies

Seaweed: dried seaweed, shredded or crumbled

Truffles: black or white truffles, grated (These treasures are outrageously pricey, but a *very* little goes a long way!)

Smoke Your Own

A dash of smoked salts will lend almost any dish the fired-up flavors you would get from grilling. Even a simple salad will soar with the deep, concentrated flavor of smoked salts.

1. Soak wood chips, such as apple wood, hickory or oak, in water for 1 hour.
2. Add the wood chips to your grill's coals, smoker drawer, or smoker box accessory.
3. Spread 2 cups of kosher or sea salt in a flat pan, and set it over indirect heat.
4. Smoke the salt for an hour over a medium-hot fire (about 300 degrees).
5. Let the salt cool; transfer to an airtight container.

SALTY TRUTHS

Roman soldiers were sometimes paid in salt, which is where *salary* comes from.

The word salad also comes from salt, which was the basis of the first salad dressing.

processed by being boiled in brine from which the liquid evaporates, leaving mountains of chunky salt crystals behind. Some of these crystals are actually slabs, which are large enough that you can bake or grill foods directly on them, seasoning the food with a luscious natural brine. Before it is processed, table salt is a mined salt.

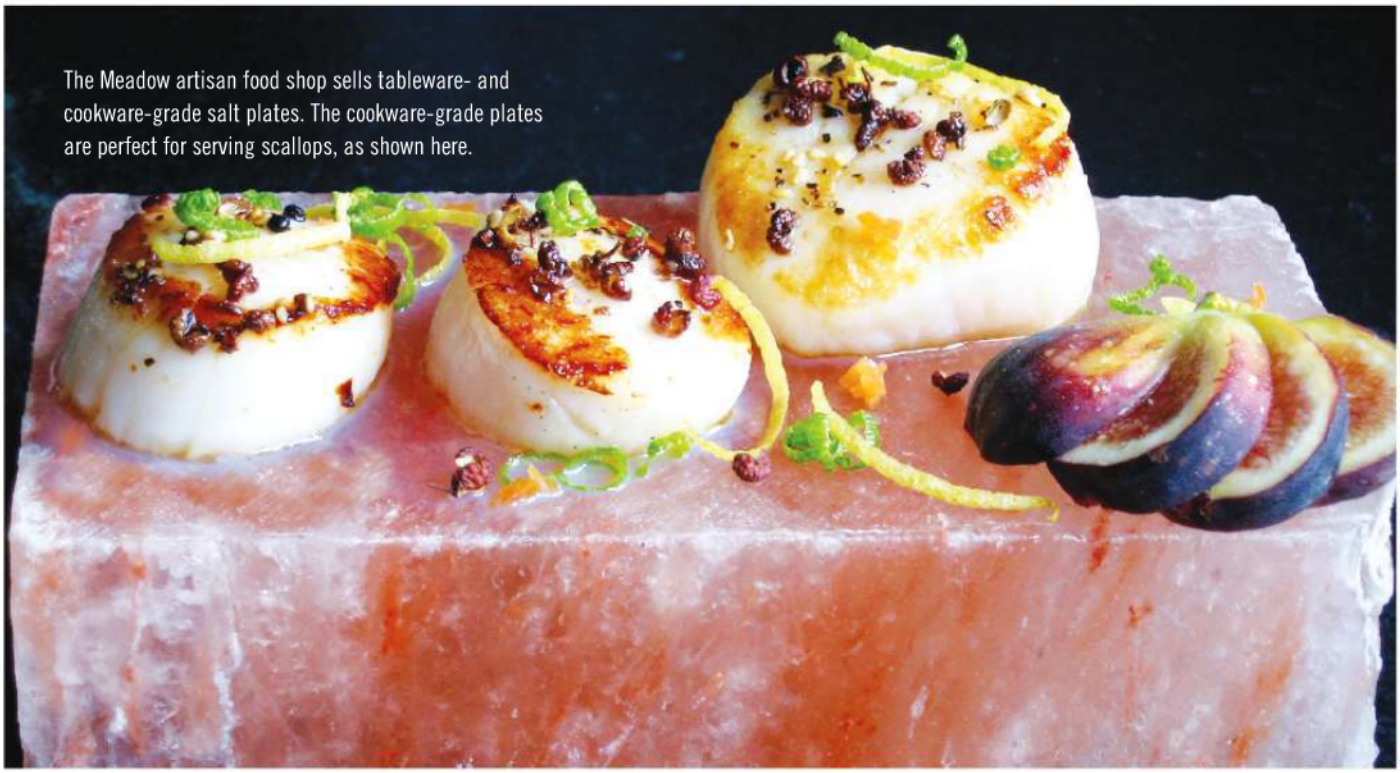
Sea salts are formed when salt water evaporates from pools and cliffs. The crystals are then carefully scraped off. There's a lot of variability in the structure of salts left behind by sea water. *Fleur de sel*, or "the flower of salt," is the caviar of all sea salts. Its lacy "flowers" form only on warm days when the winds are calm on the Brittany coast of France.

Kosher salt can be mined or from the sea. Its structure—tiny, stacked pyramids —is what makes it so valuable. Its shape helps it dissolve much better than common table salt, and it's easy to pick up by the pinch. Plus, the large surface area of the crystals imparts a lot of flavor, so you can use less. Relatively inexpensive kosher salt is the everyday cooking favorite of chefs and food lovers.

Theodor Collatos, courtesy HimalaSalt

A refreshing cucumber salad can be even more outstanding when served in a salt bowl, like the one shown above. For buying information, see Page 53.

HotMags



The Meadow artisan food shop sells tableware- and cookware-grade salt plates. The cookware-grade plates are perfect for serving scallops, as shown here.

Photo courtesy of The Meadow, *www.atthemeadow.com*

What Salt Means for Your Health

Almost all Americans consume too much salt. In fact, the average American eats about seven pounds of salt each year, and that's about double what health experts recommend. Avoiding processed foods is one way to reduce sodium intake. Salting *after* cooking is also an obvious sodium reducer. Relying on a bounty of herbs and spices for flavor is another fantastic way to cut down on that seven pounds. But there's nothing quite like salt for great cooking.

Salt wears many hats: It elicits wonderful, flavorful compounds from every food you may want to eat. It preserves many of those foods as well. It amplifies and elevates flavors in a way that simply makes things taste more like themselves. It keeps colorful foods colorful. And it helps to combine and seal in flavors as nothing else does. Salt makes foods sing, period.

Gram for gram, fancy gourmet salts contain just as much sodium as common table salt. According to Marion Nestle, a nutrition, food studies and public health professor at New York University, "Sea salts may taste better than regular salt, but they only have a health advantage if they are used in smaller amounts." And that's exactly why some people prefer sea salts—you really can use less and taste more. When gourmet salts are combined with flavor-boosting herbs and spices, and especially if they're used primarily as a finishing flavor, it's possible to reduce your sodium intake dramatically. In addition, you may benefit from the trace minerals and elements present in salts from various parts of the globe, and you won't find any of those nutrients in regular salt.

Tabitha Alterman is senior associate editor at our sister publication, Mother Earth News, *and wonders if she'll ever get her sweet tooth back after all this salty research.*

Salty Sweets

For those readers who think of dark chocolate as an herb—and who among us doesn't?—here is a particularly winning combination: dark chocolate and sea salt. It may sound odd, but your taste buds will thank you if you simply trust us.

Dark Chocolate Sea Salt Bar by Astor Chocolate, $4. *www.astordirect.com*

Gray & Smoked Salt Caramels by Fran's Chocolates, $24. *www.franschocolates.com* (pictured)

Fleur de Sel Caramels by Recchiuti, $23. *www.recchiuti.com*

Dark Chocolate Sea Salt Caramels, $10.99. *www.sanderscandy.com*

Guide to Pairing Herbs and Salts

Artisanal salts come from all over the globe, and if you're crazy for fine foods, you can find some pretty rare specimens. But the following are all yummy, and are available widely in specialty food stores.

Type	Origin	Color	Best Uses
Kosher $	various sources	white	Everyday cooking; great texture is easy to pinch and dissolves well; smooth, unaggressive flavor
Gray Sea Salt $	various coasts	gray to gray-green	Cooking and finishing salt; unrefined; mineral content; moist, briny; sometimes harsh flavor works well with meats, veggies and seafood
Himalayan $$	Himalayan mountains	pink	Cooking or finishing salt; potent, rich flavor of mineral; great with poultry, fish and in brines and sauces
Red Alaea $$$	Hawaii	red	Great for roasting and grilling, and in rubs; trace minerals; Combined with red clay ('Alaea'); moist; crunchy texture; color stands out when served; mineral and buttery flavors go well with seafood
Black Lava (or Hiwa Kai) $$$	Hawaii	black	Finishing salt; sulfuric aroma; combined with activated charcoal; silky texture; sharp, earthy flavor is best on sushi and grilled meats and veggies
Maldon $$	England	white	Finishing salt; thin, flat crystals dissolve slowly on the tongue like snowflakes; delicate flavor, light taste
Sel Gris $	France	gray	Cooking and finishing salt; great mineral content; lower sodium; high moisture; bright mineral flavor
Fleur de Sel (rare byproduct of Sel Gris) $$	France	white	The caviar of finishing salts; unrefined, light, moist crystals; violet-like aroma
Kala Namak (also known as 'Indian Black' or 'Sanchal') $	India	light pink with gray tinge	Cooking and finishing salt; strong sulfur odor; common in vegan and Indian cooking
Applewood Smoked $$	various sources of aged wood	pale orange to light brown	Cooking and finishing salt; sweet, woody, fruity flavor; use with poultry, fish and pork, and in curing meats
Hickory Smoked $$	various sources of raw wood	light to dark brown	Cooking and finishing salt; intense smoke flavor; works with red meat and Southern cooking, especially barbecue

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Herb Pairing Suggestions

complements all herbs and spices	
garlic, cumin, bay leaves, thyme	
rosemary, oregano, basil, garlic, bay leaves, thyme	
pepper, cinnamon, cloves, allspice, turmeric, saffron, garlic, bay leaves, thyme	
pepper, garlic, bay leaves, thyme	
delicate flavors such as lavender and lemon balm	
rosemary, garlic, bay leaves, thyme	
great garnish for any herbed dish	
turmeric, saffron, basil, coriander, cumin	
cinnamon, clove, nutmeg, allspice, rosemary, basil, pepper, garlic, thyme, bay leaves	
pepper, cinnamon, cloves, allspice, turmeric, saffron, garlic	

iStockphoto.com/Floortje

RESOURCES

Artisan Salt Company
www.artisansalt.com
gourmet salts, smoked salts

Celtic Sea Salt
www.celticseasalt.com
gourmet salts, salt blends

Formaggio Kitchen
www.formaggiokitchen.com
gourmet salts, smoked salts, salt blends (including Profumo del Chianti)

Frontier Natural Products Co-op
www.frontiercoop.com
gourmet salts, salt blends

HimalaSalt
www.himalasalt.com
Himalayan salt, salt blocks

J & D's
www.jdfoods.net
bacon-flavored salts

Lobel's
www.lobels.com
gourmet salts

Maine Sea Salt Company
www.maineseasalt.com
gourmet salts, smoked salts, salt blends

The Meadow
www.atthemeadow.com
gourmet salts, smoked salts, salt blocks, salt blends (including Iburi Jio Cherry)

Starwest Botanicals
www.starwest-botanicals.com
gourmet salts, smoked salts, salt blends

Citrus Peel Medicine

By Don Matesz

People have used citrus fruits as a source of medicines for thousands of years, but not in the citrus-flavored foods familiar to us today, like orange juice, key lime pie or lemon slices on slabs of salmon. While we usually consume the flesh and nectar of these succulent fruits as food, herbalists have used the rinds as medicine for numerous maladies throughout history.

In some cases, these discoveries in the apothecary led to innovation in the kitchen. For example, in Asia, the use of orange zest, lemon zest and dried orange peel in cooking developed out of the knowledge of their application as remedies for digestive disorders. A little citrus peel in your diet can go a long way.

Ancient Healing: Traditional Uses of Peel

Traditional Chinese herbal medicine uses several citrus peels for specific health support, including those of mandarin orange (*Citrus reticulata* 'Blanco') and bitter orange (*C. aurantium*).

For hundreds of years, herbalists trained in Traditional Chinese Medicine (TCM) have used mature mandarin orange peel, known as *chen pi* or *ju pi* in Chinese medicine, to improve digestion, relieve intestinal gas and bloating, and resolve phlegm. This peel acts primarily on the digestive and respiratory systems. We apply it in conditions involving a sense of distension and fullness in the chest and upper middle abdomen combined with loss of appetite, vomiting or diarrhea, or coughs with copious phlegm.

Immature mandarin orange peel, known as *qing pi* in Chinese medicine, acts primarily on the liver and stomach to promote digestion, relieve food retention and abdominal distension, and promote good liver function. Practitioners of Chinese herbology use this herb when the sense of distension and discomfort lies primarily under the rib cage rather than the central abdomen.

The Chinese materia medica states that the rind of the mature bitter orange (*zhi ke*) relieves abdominal distension and chest congestion.

The rind of the immature bitter orange (*zhi shi*) relieves gas, bloating and constipation. It also dissolves phlegm. Practitioners of TCM consider it more purgative than the mature form.

Healing with Citrus Essential Oils

Orange oil acts as a sedative, relieving nervous tension and insomnia. Blend it with lavender, or alternate with lavender or sandalwood. It also enlivens the mind and relieves depression.

Use it externally to treat intestinal spasms, constipation and diarrhea. Mix 3 drops of orange oil into 1 tablespoon of sweet almond oil, then massage the oil into the abdomen. Start the massage in the lower right-hand quarter of the abdomen, then massage in a clockwise circle from that corner, up along the rib cage, across the upper abdomen, then down along the left side and into the pelvic area.

Other uses for orange oil: Add to massage oil to help normalize blood pressure and circulation. Combine with warming oils such as cinnamon and clove to fight chills and body aches.

Discover the tradition of healing with citrus peel—the zesty, invigorating flavor can help support your health.

Bigarrade Couronnée.

Hold the Citrus Seed Extract

Buyer beware! Although several companies market grapefruit seed extract (GSE) as a "natural" antibiotic, research has revealed that citrus seed contains no antibiotic activity and the antibiotic actions of commercial GSE preparations appear to be due to the presence of synthetic preservatives.

Master herbalist Todd Caldecott has reported that two independent studies have shown that GSE does not have antibiotic actions of its own. According to Caldecott, in 1999 Japanese researchers compared a self-made alcohol extract of grapefruit seed to a commercial GSE and found that the latter contained methyl-p-hydroxybenzoate and triclosan, two synthetic, antibiotic preservatives.

Caldecott also cites a 1999 study by German researchers that compared the antimicrobial activity of self-made extract from the seed and juiceless pulp of grapefruit to six commercial GSEs. They concluded that GSE has no antimicrobial action of its own.

Caldecott further notes that neither triclosan nor benzethonium chloride (another preservative found in the commercial extracts) has FDA approval for internal use, and neither Chinese nor Ayurvedic medicine has traditionally used citrus seed to treat acute infectious disease.

ONLINE EXCLUSIVE

Find two healthy dessert recipes made with citrus peel on our website at *www.herbcompanion.com/citrusrecipes.*

iStockPhoto.com/AnikaSalsera

Citrus Rind in Your Daily Diet

You don't have to follow TCM to reap the benefits of citrus peel. Although we have discussed the traditions and uses in Chinese medicine, common sweet orange (*C. sinensis*) peel has many of the same constituents as the mandarin orange peel and also is beneficial to your health. You can incorporate 1 to 2 teaspoons of dried or powdered peel or 4 to 8 teaspoons of fresh peel into your daily diet, or you can try the yummy, easy recipes on the opposite page. Although cooking with healing herbs does not regulate your intake of the substance the way a regimented dose does, if you are looking to add some flavor and healing action to your meals, this is the way to do it!

Science Supports Citrus

Sweet and bitter orange peels have similar constituents. Modern research shows many benefits to these peels or their constituent phytochemicals.

The medicinal actions of citrus peels come in part from their primary essential oil, d-limonene. D-limonene has antimicrobial and anti-inflammatory properties. It also acts as a solvent for cholesterol, which has led some physicians to use it to dissolve cholesterol-containing gallstones. D-limonene neutralizes gastric acid and supports normal peristalsis, making it useful for relief of heartburn and gastroesophageal reflux disease (GERD). Research also indicates that d-limonene has cancer-preventive properties.

Citrus peels also contain hesperidin, a flavonoid that reduces the proliferation of cancer cells and induces programmed cell death in human colon cancer cells. Korean researchers found that *qing pi* extract induces programmed cell death in human colon cancer cells.

A team of scientists from Taiwan investigated the effects of the four citrus herbs mentioned above on adipocyte (fat cell) differentiation. They found that mandarin orange peel (*chen pi*) markedly reduced production and accumulation of triglycerides (fats) in fat cells, with the highest dose tested reducing triglyceride production by nearly 50 percent.

A team from the College of Pharmaceutical Sciences at Nankai University in Taijin, China, found that *chen pi* has anti-asthmatic properties.

Don Matesz, L.Ac., is a nutritionist, board-certified herbalist and acupuncturist. He lives and practices in Arizona. E-mail editor@herbcompanion.com *or write to us at 1503 SW 42nd St., Topeka, KS 66609 for a detailed reference list for this article.*

Howard Lee Puckett

[The Recipes]

Citrus Baked Black Cod

If you have trouble finding the delicious, oily black cod for this recipe at the market, you can substitute mahi-mahi. The black cod is worth asking your fishmonger for, however!
SERVES 4

4 (6-ounce) black cod fillets
2 tablespoons olive oil
¼ teaspoon toasted sesame oil
2 tablespoons low-sugar orange marmalade
1 tablespoon finely chopped sweet orange peel
1 to 2 tablespoons ginger juice
Fresh parsley sprigs and orange slices, for garnish

1 Place fish in a baking dish.
2 Stir together olive oil and next 4 ingredients; drizzle mixture over fish. Cover and chill 1 hour, turning once.
3 Preheat oven to 400 degrees. Bake marinated fish for 10 to 15 minutes, or just until fish flakes with fork. Serve immediately.

Turkey-Carrot Soup With Citrus Peel

You can add or vary the vegetables as you prefer. SERVES 4

1½ pounds turkey wings, neck and back bones
1 tablespoon fresh lemon juice
1 bay leaf
½ to 1 whole sweet orange peel
2 quarts water (enough to cover bones)
1 small onion, diced
2 large carrots, sliced
1 to 2 tablespoons ginger juice, to taste
Salt to taste
Chopped fresh parsley, for garnish

1 Combine first 5 ingredients in a Dutch oven. Cover and bring to a boil over medium heat; reduce to medium-low. Cook 30 minutes and skim off foam that rises to the surface.
2 Reduce heat to low and simmer at least 2 hours. Remove from heat and cool 30 minutes or until room temperature.
3 Pour broth mixture through a colander into a large bowl, discarding bay leaf and orange peel. Remove meat from bones, chop meat and reserve for soup. Discard bones.
4 Combine onion, carrots, ginger juice, turkey meat and turkey broth in a Dutch oven. Bring to a boil over medium heat, reduce heat and simmer until vegetables are tender. Season with salt and sprinkle with parsley.

Citrus Peel Coffee

SERVES 1

Your favorite hot coffee
⅛ section of a sweet orange peel
Heavy cream, cold

1 Pour hot coffee into your mug. Add orange peel and steep 5 minutes.
2 Meanwhile, shake heavy cream in sealed container until it starts to thicken somewhat. Remove orange peel from coffee and pour cream carefully on top.

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Heal with the Zing of Ginger

BY SUSAN BELSINGER AND TINA MARIE WILCOX

Ginger
Zingiber officinale

Sometimes called zingiber

Hardy to Zone 7

Ginger (*Zingiber officinale*) is our favorite rhizome to cook with. We think of it as a root, but the clusters or "hands" of ginger that we buy are really rhizomorphous. They are thickened, modified underground stems, which produce roots below and shoots aboveground. Native to Southeast Asia, this ancient plant has been cultivated intensively there for cooking and medicine, noted as far back as the Later Han Dynasty (25 A.D. to 220 A.D.).

Culinarily, the pungency of ginger is used around the globe, fresh, dried and ground. Green ginger (raw) is broken into "fingers" and sliced into coins or grated and used in soups, marinades, stir-fries, curries, chutneys, and with meat and fish dishes. We like it especially with sweet potatoes, pumpkin and winter squash, and just a touch in fruit salads. It is often sliced or cubed and candied or preserved in syrup. Pickled ginger is very popular today and is served alongside sushi.

Once dried, the volatile oils in ginger (gingerols and shogaols) become more pungent, thus making them stronger in flavor. The spicy-hot ground ginger is what we buy to make gingerbread, gingersnaps, muffins and quick breads, puddings, sauces, etc.; medicinally, it is used in Ayurvedic and Chinese prescriptions in different applications than fresh ginger. Worldwide, powdered ginger is used to flavor ginger ale, condiments and

Howard Lee Puckett (2)

Ginger Syrup

This syrup won first place in the Best Syrup or Elixir category at the 2009 International Herb Symposium. It is warming and stimulating and very good for a sore throat, cold or flu. MAKES 4½ CUPS

4 cups water
7- to 8-inch piece ginger root, peeled and cut into "coins" (about 2 cups)
½ vanilla bean, split lengthwise
2 cups raw, organic sugar
½ lime or lemon, sliced
Handful fresh lemon verbena, lemon basil or lemon balm leaves, optional

1 Bring water to a boil in a 2-quart saucepan; add ginger and vanilla bean. Return mixture to a boil; reduce heat and simmer 20 minutes. Gradually add sugar, stirring until sugar dissolves. Add lime or lemon and herbs; cover and let stand for at least 30 minutes, or until room temperature.

2 Pour mixture through a wire-mesh strainer into a medium bowl, discarding solids. Store in an airtight container in the refrigerator up to 10 days or up to a year in the freezer.

Note: To make a thicker syrup for pancakes or waffles, bring 2 cups of Ginger Syrup to a boil over medium heat. Boil 8 minutes or until syrup thickens. Serve immediately.

> *"The knobby pieces of rhizome are also referred to as 'hands' or 'races' (derived from the Latin word for 'root') and it has been suggested that it is from races of ginger that we get our somewhat dated word 'racy,' meaning something which is a bit risqué, or piquant and spicy."*
>
> Alice Arndt
> *Seasoning Savvy*
> (Haworth Herbal Press, 1999)

confections. The oil is distilled from whole dried, and then ground, ginger and is sometimes used as a commercial flavoring, but it is more often employed in perfumery.

Health Benefits

An abundance of health benefits come from this peppery rhizome; since it is warming, it increases perspiration. It also stimulates digestion, as well as respiration, circulation and the nervous system. We know many experienced gardeners who use ginger tea and candied ginger as an anti-inflammatory to ease the ache of overused joints. Probably, ginger is best known for its ability to relieve motion sickness, indigestion, nausea and morning sickness. It also helps with flatulence. As an expectorant, it eases the symptoms of colds, cough and flu. It is not recommended for individuals with digestive ulcers, high fevers or inflamed skin conditions.

Dried ginger should be a staple in your pantry and you should always have a rhizome in your refrigerator. Look for firm, plump rhizomes that are free of wrinkles, soft spots and mold. Store them in a paper bag in the crisper drawer of your refrigerator; do not seal them tightly in plastic as that will encourage mold.

If we are pickling ginger, we peel it first. It is not necessary to peel ginger for most recipes, especially if grating or mincing it. When using a paring knife to peel ginger, you lose a lot of it, so we use a grapefruit spoon, which easily scrapes off the outer skin.

Growing Ginger

To grow your own ginger, obtain fresh rhizomes (described on Page 39) as you would for cooking. Choose a garden bed that is located in an area protected from high winds and is well-drained but that will be kept moist. The soil should be slightly acidic and contain copious quantities of organic matter. Alternatively, a peat and wood bark-based soil-less potting medium with a little sand mixed in will support container-grown plants. Ginger is a tropical plant and loves humidity and filtered sun. Plant the rhizomes, growth buds facing up, with a slight covering of soil, 1 to 2 inches, in the early spring after all danger of frost has passed. In Zone 6 and 7, sprouts of new leaves will appear in mid-May. The leaves will stand through the summer and then begin to yellow as light hours shorten and temperatures get cooler in the fall. When the leaves have died, it is time to harvest the rhizomes. In subtropical and tropical climates, simply replant a few of the rhizomes for next season's harvest. In areas that receive temperatures below freezing, replant a few rhizomes in pots or trays and set in an area that does not freeze. Water occasionally, but do not keep the growing medium soggy. The next spring, discard any rotted rhizomes and begin the process once more.

Susan Belsinger tends her herbs in Maryland and Tina Marie Wilcox heads the Ozark Folk Center in Arkansas. They have been collaborating since 1996.

Grow Pretty Herbs Despite Drought or Downpour

Design Challenge

BY KATHLEEN HALLORAN

ILLUSTRATIONS BY GAYLE FORD

Reader Jessica Fields wrote us for help with a plan for her unruly Southern garden.

My yard is definitely a challenge, and I am clueless about what to plant and where. I have a lot of rocks and red clay, so plants do not do well along the edges of my house. I have a few herbs in a little bed under a bay window that gets mostly sun. I would like to learn how to grow all types of culinary, medicinal and cosmetic herbs. I live in central Alabama.

—Jessica Fields, Sylacauga, Alabama

Every garden space brings its own set of challenges. It's true that the Deep South—with its heat, humidity and often heavy clay soils—offers particular challenges to herb gardeners. But, as in many other areas of the country, time and sweat will improve both your soil and your knowledge. Digging in and learning how to plant and maintain beautiful gardens in your yard will also bring with it an acceptance that there are some things you can't change.

From the photos you sent, it looks like you have a lovely setting for a mobile home that you've expanded and built decks onto. Perennial garden beds will give your home a feeling of permanence and anchorage, beauty and bounty, as well as a steady

Mediterranean herbs can flourish in climates with periods of drought and humidity with well-drained soil.

harvest of materials to suit your interests.

You live in Zone 7b or 8a, which allows you to grow some herbs outdoors that Northern gardeners can only dream about. I'll bet in a drive around your community you would see large shrubs of rosemary in the landscapes, tree-sized bay laurel plants and many other herbs thriving in gardens. We've redesigned your sunny bay-window garden for a variety of herbs that can take advantage of your mild winters and long growing season and survive the summer heat, including a variety of traditional culinary, medicinal and cosmetic herbs.

Track Your Sun Exposure

Elsewhere in your yard, look carefully at the sun exposure you get, and for how long, in any of the areas you want to plant. Evaluate this over the course of a day and, for that matter, the seasons, because the sun exposure can change as trees leaf out or go dormant and shadows change as the sun shifts its path across the sky.

Full sun means at least six to eight hours a day, but in the South, it's helpful to think about the late-afternoon summer heat, especially if it's also being reflected off the light-colored siding of your home. While many herbs require full sun to thrive, like many other plants and even people they might appreciate some shade in the hottest time of day. So an open eastern or northern exposure that gets enough morning and early-afternoon light can be suitable for growing many herbs.

In other areas that get only dappled light for the greater part of the day because of the trees, be grateful for the shade and choose herbs and other plants that are suitable for shade or partial shade, as well as plants that you see can do well in your community, rather than struggle to grow many culinary herbs that may survive but not thrive. Either that, or trim back some of the greenery to let more light in, if you can.

Amend Soil to Drain Well

Clay is often fairly high in minerals and other nutrients, compared to sandy soils, but it can pack down and stay soggy and heavy, almost anaerobic, meaning not enough air gets down to the roots. Those conditions spell almost certain death, at least in the long run, for almost all Mediterranean herbs. They demand soil that drains well, so improving the drainage in clay soil is critical for growing herbs successfully in your climate. Heavy soil can be improved by digging in sand, but clay plus sand can equal a soil texture that resembles brick—so be sure to add lots of organic matter to your soil whenever you add sand. That's where compost comes in, and it will also feed those busy worms and microorganisms that live in the soil and do their part. This will help balance out extremes of pH, improve the soil dramatically over time and give your herbs a better medium to sink their roots into.

The more decayed organic material you add to your soil, the better, and that will also have the effect of raising the height of that little bed under the bay window, which always improves drainage. You can dig about 30 percent to 50 percent compost, sand and other amendments in the top foot or so of your native soil. Prep work always pays off in healthier, more robust garden plants, but don't think you're done, as improving your soil is an ongoing process.

The Mediterranean, where most of these herbs originated, has rocky soil. So you don't have to worry too much about the rocks in your soil, as long as they don't form a solid layer that impedes drainage. I usually pull rocks out of garden beds, as they annoy me, and I try to find other uses for them. Starting with small transplants makes planting easier in rocky soil, for the patient gardener.

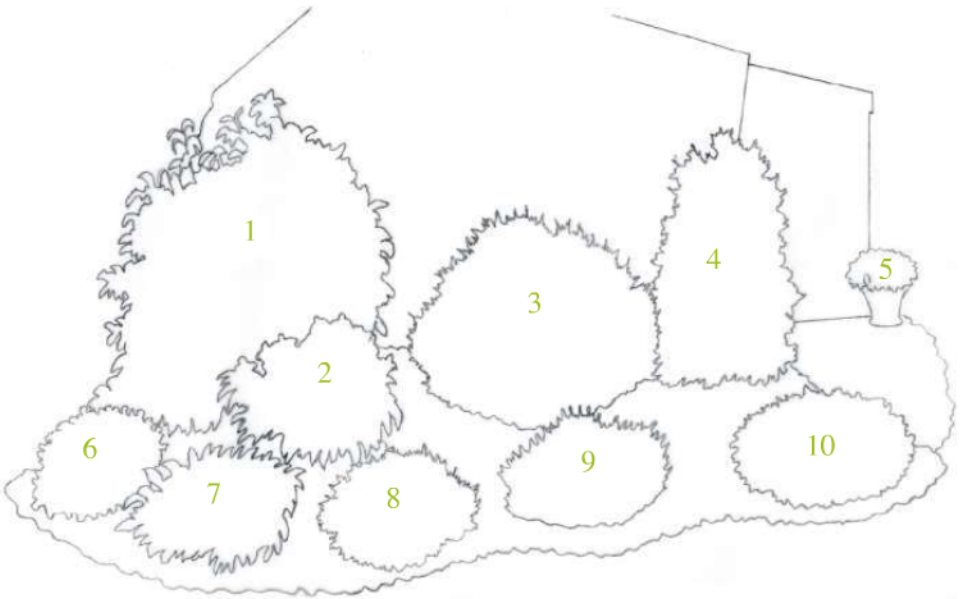
Regulate Moisture

The often wet conditions and high humidity levels are another challenging factor in growing the many drought-tolerant herbs that you want. You've raised your bed and improved your soil so that it drains faster. That helps a lot, but you also want to keep the rainy season in mind when you plant.

Spacing the herbs out a bit will let air circulate around and through them as they grow. Avoid that cottage-garden look where the plants all grow together and lean into each other so that the garden looks like a wonderful jumble of nonstop plants. You're going for a different look. Let each plant have its airy space. This will help you avoid many of the powdery mildew, root rot and other fungal diseases that are prevalent in moist conditions.

Plant Key

1. Rose
2. Purple coneflower
3. Rosemary
4. Bay laurel
5. Lemon balm
6. Chives
7. Sage
8. Chamomile
9. Lavender
10. Oregano



Mulching the bed after you plant is an important step to prevent water from splashing up and collecting onto the lower leaves—as well as the other myriad ways that mulch helps, such as weed control, preventing the top layer of the soil from crusting over, and so on. Look around for suitable local materials to use, and consider light-colored gravel mulch (or perhaps those rocks you complain about?), which can reflect light back into the interior of the plants and help alleviate dark, moist conditions at the lowest garden level.

During dry times, water the new plants at their base, not with an overhead sprinkler system. While they need to stay moist as they're first settling in and getting established, gradually back way off on the watering to encourage them to sink their roots deep into the ground, instead of staying near the surface; an extensive root system will help the plants avoid wilting in summer heat.

The Bay Bed

We've increased the size, height and width of your bay-window garden bed to increase your space and design possibilities. If a bed is too narrow, you don't do much more than line up the plants in a row like soldiers. You don't have to think in rectangles, as a bed that curves around that front corner will soften its lines and give the garden a graceful appeal. The way the bed mounds up from the flat ground (as a result of adding compost and amendments to improve drainage) has the added benefit of disguising the foundation of your home, while giving the plants the feel of embracing it. The bed's height will also bring the plants closer to the window to improve your view when you're inside looking out.

The steps leading to your front door may be a comfortable home for a pot of something like lemon balm, a useful culinary and medicinal herb that can be aggressive in the ground. If your steps aren't wide enough to avoid tripping over it, tuck that pot into an empty spot in the bed, but check it occasionally to be sure it isn't rooting into the ground through its bottom drainage holes.

A large shrub rose at the corner can also be trellised up to the roofline if you like. One to consider is a 'Mutabilis' rose, if you can find it; it does well here in Texas, where I live, and might also do well for you—and it's fascinating. It gives the illusion of having different-colored blooms on it at the same time, because the flowers open yellow and then age to a deep pink.

The bay tree in the bay bed (pun not really intended, but, hey why not?) could take many years to reach the size shown here, but it is worth the wait. A bay laurel plant is hardy to about Zone 8, so if you live a bit further north in Alabama or have a particularly harsh winter, consider growing it in a container until it is big and robust enough to handle conditions in the ground. Consider it a pet.

Kathleen Halloran is a freelance writer living in beautiful Austin, Texas. See photos of Jessica Fields' garden at www.herbcompanion.com/designchallenge.

Challenge us: If you have a problem garden site and would like help, write to us. Occasionally, we provide a "Garden Spaces" design solution. Send requests to letters@herbcompanion.com *with "Design Challenge" in the subject line.*

10 Herbs for Drought *and* Humidity

Rose (*Rosa* spp.). So many to choose from, and they do well in the South if they have adequate drainage. Go for a big, tough shrub rose or vigorous climber that you can tie onto a trellis. One favorite is 'Mutabilis', a china rose (*R. chinensis*) with blooms that change colors as they age; it can grow to 6 feet or more.

Purple coneflower (*Echinacea purpurea, E. angustifolia*, many varieties and hybrids). This native perennial, an important medicinal herb, is also a garden favorite. Now available in a wide array of colors and growing habits, it reaches 1 to 2 feet and is hardy in much of the United States.

Rosemary (*Rosmarinus officinalis*). What can be a tender, fussy, disease-prone potted plant in the North is a showy landscape plant in mild climates. There are many varieties and hybrids, some upright and some low-growing sprawlers. It has culinary, medicinal and cosmetic uses.

Bay laurel (*Laurus nobilis*). This tender perennial is an evergreen tree in warm Southern climates, but elsewhere it is grown in containers and protected during the winter. It is a favorite culinary herb from the Mediterranean.

Lemon balm (*Melissa officinalis*). Being a mint family member, this hardy perennial herb can be a bit aggressive in the average garden so is a good candidate for a container. The luscious lemon fragrance makes it great in the kitchen, but it is increasingly noted for its medicinal value.

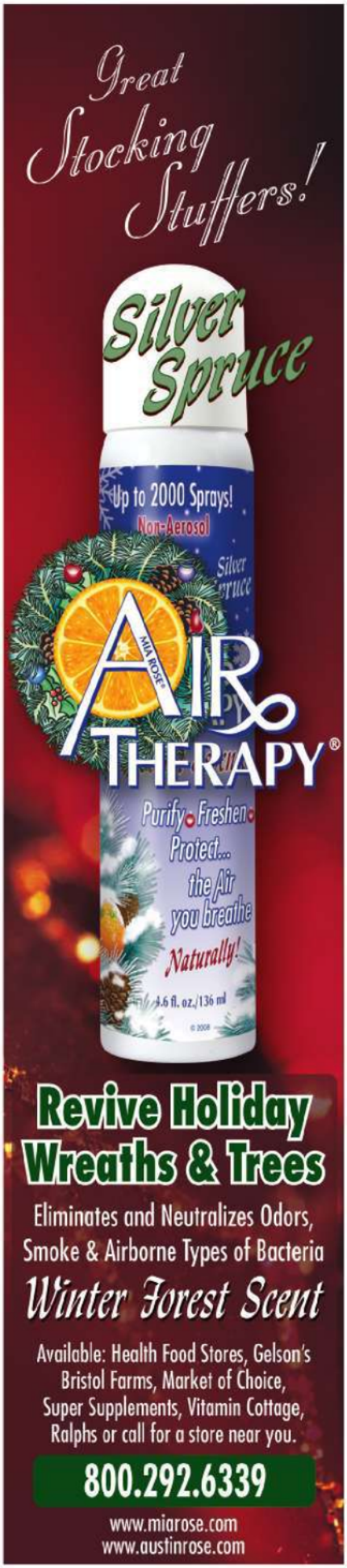
Chives (*Allium schoenoprasum*). A perennial favorite in both the garden and the kitchen, these tidy foot-high clumps of strappy leaves show off bright pink pompon flowers in early spring. Will seed itself around the garden, but not in a troublesome way.

Sage (*Salvia officinalis*). This is a carefree culinary/medicinal/cosmetic plant for the traditional herb garden. It is a small shrub, about 2 feet tall, and comes in a variety of color patterns and leaf shapes, including the handsome, rounder-leafed 'Berggarten'.

Chamomile (*Chamaemelum nobile* and *Matricaria recutita*). These are two plants with look-alike flowers, the first a low-growing perennial (called Roman chamomile), the second a taller annual known as German chamomile. Both have myriad uses.

Lavender (*Lavandula* spp.). Many species and varieties are available of this invaluable cosmetic herb that also plays a minor role in both the kitchen and the medicine cabinet. In the South, you can grow *L. stoechas*, with its showy purple bracts, and *L. dentata*, with its ferny leaves, as well as the more traditional English lavender (*L. angustifolia*), but good drainage and not wetting the leaves are critical.

Oregano (*Origanum* spp.). No herb garden (or pizza) is complete without this perennial herb, as well as its annual cousin, marjoram. It's a wide-ranging genus with many different fragrances and forms, most staying under about 1½ to 2 feet.



Make Your Own Easy, Natural Dog Food

Don't bore Fido. Try the vitamin-rich, balanced recipes on Page 48 to perk up your pet's mealtime routine.

BY LYNN ALLEY

Imagine what your life would be like if, day after day, you opened the same box of granola for breakfast and dinner. Not a very appealing idea, is it? Yet day after day, millions of us expect our pets to be perfectly happy and stay perfectly healthy with the same old "box of cereal."

If your dog is lucky, you're at least buying him something high-quality. And if he's not so lucky, you may be buying a less-expensive generic brand from your local supermarket. Although one choice might be slightly healthier than the other, either way, it's still a boring proposition.

Recipes like The Colonel's Chicken Dinner on Page 48 can enliven your pet's meals.

But what if you did the same thing for your dog that you do for yourself? Mix up some grub using real ingredients, a little variety and a sense of purpose?

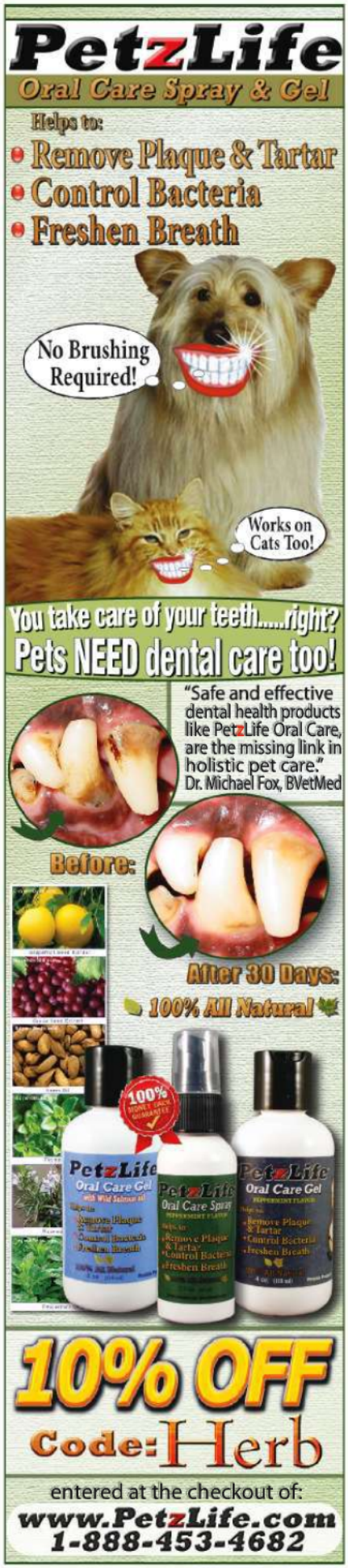
True, cooking for your dog requires a bit of advance planning. Just as feeding yourself and your family requires some knowledge about what you need to stay healthy, so does feeding your dog. He or she is a scavenger by nature, but he still needs more than just assorted table scraps or chicken from the local broiler.

Look to the diet of a canine in nature for clues. According to Steve Brown, author of *Unlocking the Canine Ancestral Diet* (Dogwise Publishing, 2010), in nature, coyotes, wolves and the ancestors of modern dogs thrive on a diet that is made up of about 50 percent protein, 45 percent fat and 5 percent vegetables. Grain is rarely a part of the primordial canine diet, but check out its place in the list of ingredients of most dog foods. Fiber is supplied to a dog from the fur and feathers of animals they may catch or scavenge, while calcium (cats and dogs all have calcium requirements that are considerably greater than those of humans) is supplied by the bones of their catches. For this reason, it is always a good idea to supplement your home-cooked meals with a calcium powder.

Adding fresh herbs to your dog's food can help keep him healthy and happy and, while I'd choose carefully, remembering that some plants and herbs can be toxic to dogs, there are food herbs and plants that are a pretty safe bet for your pet's diet. I, for instance, always add fresh parsley to my dog's homemade grub. It supplies a bit of fiber, some chlorophyll, and vitamins A, B and C. And I like the flecks of color it adds to his otherwise-monotone meals. A bit of kombu or seaweed soaked in water is also a good bet as an occasional addition to your dog's dinner. Raw grated carrot is well tolerated by most pets. Garlic is considered a good deterrent to fleas and worms, according to *Dr. Pitcairn's Complete Guide to Natural Health for Dogs and Cats* (Rodale, 2005) by Richard Pitcairn, D.V.M. And just as in humans, caraway seed aids digestion. In the springtime, when the very young, tender nettles are coming up, I sometimes pick a few leaves to chop up and add to my dog's dinner.

Turn to Page 48 for two basic recipes to start you on your way, but I strongly recommend that you check out some good books on preparing dog dishes at home so that you get a broader sense of your canine's nutritional needs (suggestions on Page 49). You can add some of the above-mentioned herbs or vegetables to the basic recipes below. It's always a good idea to vary your dog's meals, just like you do yours. Remember that the nutritional supplements are important, so don't leave them out if you want to feed your pooch a balanced meal.

Lynn Alley is a Southern California-based food and wine writer who has cooked for her pets for years.



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Circle #10; see card pg 51

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[The Recipes]

The Colonel's Chicken Dinner

1 pound chicken or turkey (combination of breasts and thighs)
3 ounces chicken liver
1 large sweet potato or yam, baked and chopped
½ pound broccoli florets or stalks
2 tablespoons fresh parsley
¼ teaspoon iodized salt
1 teaspoon eggshell powder or bonemeal
100 IU vitamin E
½ teaspoon wild salmon or cod liver oil

1 In a sauté pan, cook the chicken and liver until the juices run clear when pierced with a fork.
2 Allow the meat to cool slightly, then pulse it in a food processor until ground. (You can experiment with the texture.)
3 Place sweet potato, broccoli, parsley, salt and supplements in the workbowl of a food processor and pulse until thoroughly mixed.
4 Mix the vegetables and meat thoroughly. Refrigerate or freeze immediately in individual portion-size packets.

Beef Dinner

1 pound lean ground beef
1 ounce beef heart or liver
10 ounces cooked quinoa or brown rice
2 ounces mixed greens (can include some parsley or nettle)
1 clove garlic, pressed
1 teaspoon eggshell powder or bonemeal
¼ teaspoon iodized salt
50 IU vitamin E

1 In a frying pan, cook the ground beef and heart or liver until lightly browned.
2 Place cooked meat, grain, greens and other ingredients in a food processor and pulse until thoroughly mixed. *Recipe continues on Page 49.*

3 Divide into individual portions (portion size will depend upon the size of your dog) and refrigerate or freeze immediately.

Healthy Powder

Excerpted with permission from Dr. Pitcairn's Complete Guide to Natural Health for Dogs & Cats. *©2005 by Richard H. Pitcairn and Susan H. Pitcairn*

2 cups nutritional yeast
1 cup lecithin granules
¼ cup kelp powder
¼ teaspoon sodium ascorbate

1 Mix all ingredients together thoroughly and store in a jar or plastic bag in the refrigerator or freezer.
2 To your pet's food, add 1 to 2 teaspoons a day for small dogs, 2 to 3 teaspoons per day for medium-sized dogs and 1 to 2 tablespoons per day for large dogs.

Read More About Pet Nutrition

Dr. Pitcairn's Complete Guide to Natural Health for Dogs & Cats (Rodale, 2005), by Richard Pitcairn and Susan Hubble Pitcairn

The Healthy Dog Cookbook (T.F.H. Publications, 2008), by Jonna Anne, Mary Straus and Shawn Messonnier

Unlocking the Canine Ancestral Diet (Dogwise, 2010), by Steve Brown

Woofing It Down (AuthorHouse, 2007), by Patricia O'Grady

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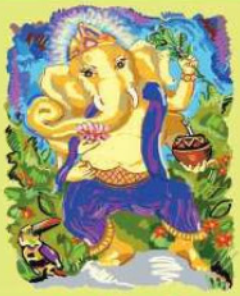

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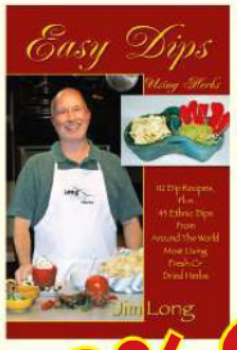

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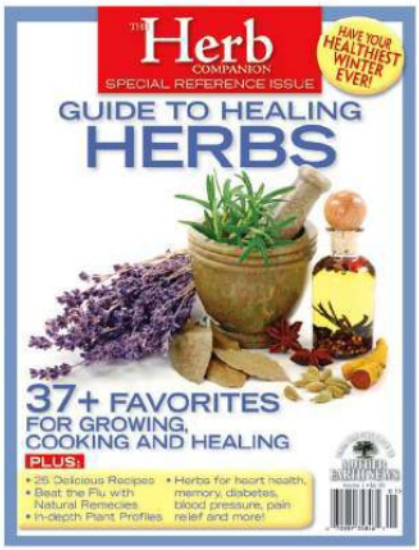

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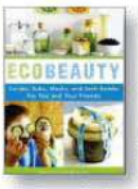

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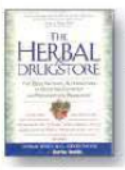

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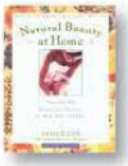

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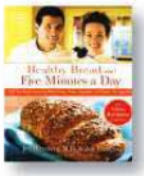

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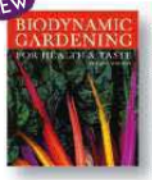

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